

Acolytes

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ST. VINCENT'S TRACT
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THE ORDER OF ST. VINCENT
FOR ACOLYTES

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Acolytes

One of the minor orders peculiar to the Western Church, although the name is Greek.

The word acolyte comes from a Greek word *akolouthos* (Latin: *sequens*), meaning a young servant or attendant who waits continually upon another: a follower.

About the end of the 2nd or early in the 3rd century, other new officers below the order of deacons were introduced, amongst them this of Acolytes, though only in the Latin Church as a distinct order. In the rituals of the Greek Church the word occurs only as another name for the order of subdeacon.

The form of ordination employed in the case of Acolytes is prescribed by a canon of the Fourth Council of Carthage. "When any Acolythist is ordained, the bishop shall inform him how he is to behave himself in his office; and he shall receive a candlestick with a taper in it from the archdeacon, that he may understand that he is appointed to light the candles of the church. He shall also receive an empty pitcher to furnish wine for the Eucharist of the blood of Christ."

Hence it appears that the Acolyte's office at that period consisted chiefly in two things, viz., lighting the candles of the church and attending the officiating priest with wine for the Eucharist. Before the year 1300 the four orders of acolyte, exorcist, reader, and ostiarius began to be conferred in the Western Church.

*From—Dictionary of Christian Antiquities—
Smith and Cheetham.*

For a comprehensive treatment of the subject see—The History of Acolytes and Servers—W. S. Williams—or order from Church book stores.

Who Was St. Vincent?

St. Vincent, a Deacon of the Spanish Church, was born at Saragossa, and martyred at Valencia, A. D. 303 during the Diocletian persecution, the tenth and last, at about the same time that St. Alban, the first martyr of the British Church, suffered in England.

Renowned as a preacher, glorified by the severity of his sufferings, and praised for the fortitude with which he bore them, he is especially remembered for his humility, in that, as a Deacon, the lowest Order in the ordained Ministry, he served his Bishop faithfully.

St. Vincent is one of the few martyrs in the famous Fourth Century of Martyrdom whose acts are quite authentic. They may be traced to a contemporaneous age.

In art he is young, mild, beautiful; is vested as a Deacon, frequently as a sub-deacon, bearing a palm (of victory) and sometimes a smoking censor.

The instrument of his torture is a gridiron on which his salt-besprinkled body was burned, and broken pottery over which his body was dragged. Usually near him is perched a crow or raven, symbolical of restlessness of the Saints in the world.

His relics are at Valencia.



Why Was He Chosen Patron of the Order?

He was chosen patron because as a Deacon he would be an example to all Acolytes who must always be ready to serve the clergy no matter how humble the part assigned to them; because of his fortitude he teaches courage, that strong element in moral dependability, which also implies endurance, and encouragement of others.

When Was The Order of St. Vincent Founded?

Guilds of St. Vincent date back to the 1880's, St. Clement's, Phila., in 1882 and The Advent, Boston, later. But the order owes its existence to the vision of Robert T. Walker, an architect, who served for years in the Church of The Advent, Boston, Mass. The Manual we now use is largely based on that drawn up under his direction. Mr. Walker was the first Secretary-General and Treasurer, and continued as such until his death on Christmas Eve 1931. R. I. P.

The Order was officially founded on St. Vincent's Day, January 22, 1915, with the following Council:

The Revd. Kenneth R. Forbes
The Revd. Charles E. McCoy
Mr. Robert T. Walker
Mr. Arthur M. Crane
Mr. Thos. C. Henningsen
Mr. Charles H. Westcott
Mr. Francis H. Kent



The O. S. V. was affiliated with The Scottish Guild of Servers on October 7, 1939, and with the (English) Guild of the Servants of the Sanctuary on March 8, 1948.



THE MOTTO OF THE ORDER
Amori Christi et Ecclesiae. "For the love of Christ and His Church."

Objects of the Order

1. To promote holy living amongst its members.
2. To promote loyal obedience to ecclesiastical superiors.
3. To encourage more frequent attendance at the Holy Eucharist, and more careful preparation for its reception.
4. To promote friendship and brotherhood amongst servers.

The Rules of the Order of St. Vincent as set forth in the Manual are to be considered as a minimum requirement for membership. Each Chapter may provide such additional rules as its local use may require.



Rules

1. To pray to God every day.
2. If physically possible, to be present at the Holy Eucharist every Sunday.
3. To make due preparation before serving, and to say the prayer of the Order.
4. To serve in strict accordance with the desires of the Priest whom I may be assisting, irrespective of my own inclination.
5. To receive the Holy Communion, after due preparation, at least monthly and on Christmas Day, Easter, Whitsunday and within the Octave of St. Vincent's Day.
6. To render loyal obedience to my ecclesiastical superiors.
7. To obey diligently the rules of any parochial organization of which I may be a member.
8. Always to speak reverently of Holy things.

The Order Hopes

For emphasis on the Anglican Communion-wide-fellowship among servers, versus the parochial; that every server will have a progressive Rule of Life; that he will become intelligently liturgically interested; and that he will consider the work a lay vocation, and continue indefinitely with the Order.



Admission Requirements

Fourteen years of age or older. Confirmed Communicant. Having served at least nine months; three of the nine months as a probationer. Three months probation required of all before admission even if special dispensation for the more matured server is requested.



Memberships

Bishop, Priest, and Deacon Associates. Active Acolyte. Lay Associate. Where there is no Chapter an individual, with the consent of a Priest he serves, may be admitted to the Secretary-General's Chapter.



Yearly Report and Dues

A yearly report must be received concerning every active member, and the stated dues paid. Life Memberships added to the Endowment Fund.



St. Vincent's Bulletin

Printed and distributed periodically to those paying dues.



A Manual, A Server's Guide, and several Tracts are for sale.